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BEHOLD: THE MYSTERIOUS, THE WONDERMENT OF THE WORLD.

ISSUE # 6

JUNE 1996

"GOATSUCKER" IN MEXICO?: Police in the Mexican state of Sinaloa set up nets, traps and cages to try to capture a vampire-like animal which has attacked pets and small animals. Known locally as "Chupacabra," or "goatsucker," the creature has killed 100 goats, sheep and hens in five Mexican states. A spokesman for the Institute of Animal Pathology in Culiacan confirmed that the dead animals had regularly spaced puncture marks in the back of the head or neck, adding that attacks of the Chupacabra have also been reported in Puerto Rico and Central America. Villagers are baffled because the victims are left uneaten after their blood has been drained. Vigilante groups are being formed to track down and kill the creature responsible, thought to be a vampire bat, wolf or large cat. Source: Earthweek, May 12, 1996.
GREAT BALLS OF FIRE IN WASHINGTON STATE: Bigfoot, UFOs, phantom invasion forces and Ogopogo, the famous lake monster are all part of the Okanogan County legends that seem to be required learning to live here.

To keep up with our yearly doses of unexplained mysteries, we have started our very own "O Files."

The files will someday contain documented evidence, photos, (if they are ever provided) and notes on the investigations into the unexplained phenomena that are told to our newspaper staff.

Since the beginning of the year we have sought the truth concerning a greedy Bigfoot, that wants to keep its gold, a phantom military invasion force, that was to invade our country, mysterious black spy planes, that were keeping track of our every move, and most recently a UFO that came down somewhere east of Tonasket, yet south of Republic. But of all of the unexplained phenomena that have occurred in our county, the closest to being proven is the "O File" entitled Great Ball of Fire.

On Wednesday, September 13, around 7:00 p.m. a ball of fire was spotted descending towards the ground leaving behind it a trail of smoke and being chased by several planes.

On Thursday, September 14, several people claim to have seen white trucks marked NASA travel through town and turn on Highway 20, heading towards Republic.

I followed my sources instructions and headed to Republic to find the NASA trucks and to see if they had permission to be in Okanogan County. My source said that it had reportedly landed approximately three miles south of Republic, and was in an area near Mill Creek. There is no Mill Creek near Republic, but I attempted to locate anything close to that. Not having any success, I talked with local people in Republic's business community and was unable to find the trucks or ball of fire.

THE INTELLECTUAL NEWSLETTER THAT CHALLENGES THE MIND.

A dispatcher for the Ferry County Sheriff's Office, lets call him Bob, told me of a complaint registered by a resident that lived south of Republic. The resident had reported seeing a large trail of smoke in the sky and that it ended beneath the tree line.

This gave me hope and I asked him if he could give me the road that the person lived on. He agreed and asked me to stop by the Sheriff's Office to pick up the information.

When I arrived, the Undersheriff of Ferry County was there to greet me and inform me that the information was unavailable and that I would need a court order for any information that he could give me.

Frustrated and tired, I didn't feel like having a discussion with him on the laws concerning public information and what was to be made available to the public, so I left Republic and headed back home.

To say that the trip was useless, would be wrong. I found a possible explanation for the phantom military troops, in that U. S. Army reserve troops are building a fence along the Canadian border and that some of them are staying in Republic.

When I returned to Okanogan County I contacted the Okanogan County Director of Unexplained Phenomena, Mike Murray (ok, he's actually the County Undersheriff.)

Murray said that he had also heard of the smoke trail and put me onto several other sources.

A Washington State Patrol Trooper had reportedly been one of the witnesses to the ball of fire and I was told that an off-duty Tonasket Police officer had seen the NASA trucks roll through town at roughly 3:00 p.m. on Sept. 14. From there I tried to find and talk with the officers, but that came to a deadend. I began making calls to NASA installations around the country in an effort to find if the trucks had been in the area and what might have caused them to be here.

Spokespeople from Washington D.C., Edwards Air Force Base, Jet Propulsion Lab., Fairchild AFB, McChord AFB, Whidbey Island Naval Air Station and a NASA research center in San Francisco all denied that there were any planes in the area on the night of Sept. 3 or that any NASA trucks had been in the state of Washington.

An Associated Press story later informed me that they had given me misinformation and that there have been NASA personnel, in the Columbia Basin, that were working on experiments.

As to the ball of fire, none of them could explain it or what a possible cause could be.

A meteor maybe? A piece of satellite? A test model of a rocket engine? According to the NASA personnel I talked with, none of these are possible answers.

The public relations officer from Washington D.C. said that a meteor or a piece of satellite would, 99 times out of 100, burn up before hitting the Earth and that if it didn't burn up, then 3 out of 4 times, it would land in an ocean.

The lack of witnesses and information concerning the Great Ball of Fire wasn't a total loss. Source: Gazette, Oroville, Washington, Oct. 26, 1995.

FATHER OF ALL MEN: Every man on Earth today can trace his Y chromosome to one male who lived 190,000 years ago, before anatomically modern humans had evolved, a study suggests.

There were many males around at the time, but only this one left a Y chromosome legacy that persists today, researcher Michael Hammer said. The Y chromosome is one of 24 kinds of microscopic threads that holds genes.

Unlike other chromosomes, it is passed from father to son. Source: The Toronto Sun, November 23, 1995.

DOLPHIN FUNERAL REPORTED: A member of a tour group that was viewing and swimming with a pod of dolphins in New Zealand's Bay of Islands captured on video what is believed to be the first images ever taken of a mother dolphin grieving for and carrying her dead calf. TV3 Network, which broadcast footage of the emotional scene, reported that marine experts knew dolphin mothers often carry their dead for days, but the phenomenon had never been photographed. Dolphin expert Wade Doak told TV3 that the grief-stricken mother's pod sheltered and protected her while she was grieving. "They'll stay with it and will not abandon her, and the little funeral cortege will persist until the disintegration of the baby," Doak said. Source: Earthweek, April 14, 1996.

TOAD INVASION IN BOLIVIA: A plague of toads in central Bolivia caused widespread panic during the last 10 days of February, according to press reports from La Paz. Three villages near Cochabamba were overrun by thousands of the amphibians, and farmers in the area reportedly feel that the onslaught is a sign of impending tragedy. Radio reports from the villages of Vinto, San Jorge and Viloma said that the main road connecting the region with La Paz is coated with a thick layer of dead toads, and that the stench is unbearable. Children are said to be terrified by the toads and unable to sleep. Experts believe that weeks of drought has forced the toads out of their usual habitats into farmland in search of water. Source: Earthweek, March 10, 1996.

MANY CLAIM COUGAR SIGHTINGS IN PHILADELPHIA AREA: It has been reported traipsing about rowhouse neighborhoods, scuttling through suburban culverts, and lying on a knoll overlooking I-95 as if contemplating the traffic. Its travels would have taken it from Southwest Philadelphia to Delaware, across several major highways, including the Blue Route and the turnpike, around the edges of busy shopping malls, and through crowded residential districts.

It has been tracked by bloodhounds, aircraft and seemingly every would-be big-game hunter in the tristate region, all without success. Yet something is out there, scores of witnesses say, and it is not Elvis in a camel coat. If the reports are to be believed, if just half are true, a cougar has had the run of the region for more than a year now. Since its first reported sighting on Jan. 3 of 1995, the animal has allegedly been seen by as many as 80 to 100 people. Witnesses include golfers teeing off at the 15th hole of the Cobbs Creek Golf Course in West Philadelphia, a Wyoming businessman staying at an Upper Merion hotel, a second-grade schoolteacher in Delaware, numerous area police officers, a professional tracker, and two SPCA officials.

Homeowners from Whitemarsh to Wilmington have reported finding its paw prints. A resident of Ardencroft, Del., said he captured it briefly on video. Last week, several residents in and around Aston in southern Delaware County reported seeing it again.

Could it be?

"Absolutely," said the New Castle County officer, Cpl. Butch Lefebvre. "I've seen his tracks - and I've seen him."

Lefebvre has become one of the area's busiest cougar chasers. He has organized aerial searches for the beast and claims to have seen it three times during hunts while on foot.

His interest in cougars was sparked several years ago by a nature show on television, and he has since read several books and hunted cougars out West.

He killed one last year in Idaho, he said.

Pennsburg tracker Jim Hosgood, who combed the Cobbs Creek area a year ago with his bloodhounds, Watson and Esmeralda, is another believer.

"It's a cougar," said Hosgood, who also has reported seeing the big cat.

"He jumped up on a big rock in the middle of the creek. My dog let out a bellow, and he jumped in the grass, and that's the last we seen him."

Still, those who remain unconvinced find themselves in good company.

"I'm skeptical there are cougars being seen," said Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife officer Keith Mullin, who has investigated sightings in southern Chester County. "I have not yet had anybody clearly prove it."

Most of the tracks, he said, turned out to belong to foxes or large dogs. Others could have been cougars, but were questionable, he said.

Biologist Kevin Hansen, former science director at the Mountain Lion Foundation in California, also expressed disbelief.

"Most people wouldn't recognize a cougar if it was standing next to them," Hansen said. "Rarely is it ever a lion. More frequently, is a misidentification. The power of suggestion is enormous," he added. Once people think there's a cougar around, they are more likely to think that they have seen it, he said.

Hansen, however, is the first to admit that a cougar could successfully navigate a heavily populated metropolitan region.

"The key there is not the presence of people; they tolerate people," he said.

"It speaks to a lion's ability to use vegetation to stay out of sight.

They're absolute masters at it."

What cougars need, he said, is what the area has: a lot of low vegetation and a lot of deer. Source: Knight-Ridder Newspapers, March 10, 1996, via Curt Sutherly.

NEW MINERAL BAFFLES SCIENTISTS: A vivid blue chunk of rock bought at a roadside stall in Morocco 15 years ago has been identified as a new mineral, but its qualities, which include the ability to change color, are baffling British scientists. Geologist Anna Grayson was unable to identify the stone after coming across it at a souvenir stall during a field trip. It remained at her home for years until she took it to London's Natural History Museum. Experts there discovered it is made up of millions of crystals that are fibrous on a submicroscopic scale, like asbestos, and could be lethal if inhaled. Containing silicon, aluminum, calcium, magnesium, iron and oxygen, the unnamed mineral changes from purple to blue to cream when rotated. This quality has never been observed before in such a mineral.

Source: Earthweek, March 31, 1996.

THE WEREWOLF GENE: Scientists are hot on the trail of a "werewolf" gene - or at least close to identifying what may have turned some unfortunate individuals into "ape men" or "werewolves" in freak shows and circuses.

Pragna Patel, a neurologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, and several U.S. and Mexican colleagues have narrowed the search for the gene in a Mexican family with an extraordinary five-generation history.

Male victims have hair covering most of their faces and upper bodies, while women victims suffer from thick, hairy patches on their skin.

Patel, a molecular geneticist, said in a telephone interview she was disturbed by a news release from a scientific journal that dubbed it a "werewolf" syndrome. Source: Delve Report, January 1996.

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LO! is published quarterly by the United Aerial Phenomena Agency, P.O. Box 347032, Cleveland Ohio 44134. Editors are Allan J. Manak and Rick R. Hilberg. Managing Editor is Carol J. Hilberg. Subscriptions are four issues for \$7.00, or eight issues for \$13.00. Subscriptions outside the U.S.A. add \$3.00 per year.